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PRAIRIE CHICKEN AND WILD PIGEON IN JACKSON COUNTY, MICHIGAN, 1894.

BY L. WHITNEY WATKINS.

It has been nearly twenty years since the last prairie chicken, *Tympanuchus americanus*, was seen in this or neighboring localities. Occasionally reports have come to me of their presence still, in the vicinity of Freedom Swamps Washtenaw County, and Portage and Wolf Lakes Jackson County. Careful investigation, however, has found these reports founded, usually, upon the exaggeration of some hunter, possessed of an enthusiastic turn of mind, and entirely lacking in substantial evidence.

In 1893 we have the following notes on this species from neighboring counties: "Extinct at Ann Arbor, Washtenaw County," Dr. J. B. Steere. "Extinct for more than thirty years in Monroe County," Jerome Trombley. Authorities have generally regarded them as a game bird figuring only in the romantic past of this part of Michigan.

On April 22, 1894, Charles V. Hay, a clever sportsman of a town near at hand, brought me the welcome news that on the day previous he had actually flushed sixteen "chickens" in Merrill's cranberry marsh of about thirty acres extent and not a mile from the village of Norvell. As Mr. Hay has hunted these birds on the western plains there could be little doubt of the identity, and sure enough they were easily found, in all their old-time glory, a few days later. Local hunters were much excited as the news spread, and old followers of the "sport with rod and gun" shook their gray heads in silent amazement. They would as soon have expected to again witness the running ascent of the wild turkey among the broad-topped trees of the "Oak Openings," as the plunging rise of the prairie hen from the adjoining meadow. These birds are now nesting and once again the loud "booming" of the cocks

has resounded back and forth among the hills which have not known the old familiar sound for many a year before.

Adolphe B. Covert, the veteran ornithologist and taxidermist of Washtenaw County, tells me that a small band of prairie chickens has continued to live in a tract of marsh land some distance from Ann Arbor, notwithstanding Dr. Steere's notes to the contrary. Thus it is very probable that our immigrants, unless they switched off from some western contingent of Coxey's Army, came from some such isolated locality where yet a few pairs nest, rather than in a long flight from the southwest as many would believe.

On June 13, 1894, late in the afternoon, as I was returning from an interesting day among the late-nesting water birds, a fine male wild pigeon, *Ectopistes migratorius*, was startled from a plowed field, lately sown to buckwheat, and rose in full view not more than thirty feet away, affording identification of which I am positive. He flew a few rods and dropped gracefully into the dense foliage of a maple tree by the roadside. Then as I approached, wondering at the presence of the beautiful bird, now so rare, whose garnished plumage turned the rays of the sun into a thousand bright reflections, and in a land over which, in numbers eclipsing all other species, his ancestry once fairly swarmed, he again took wing and with a rapid, measured tread of his pointed pinions disappeared in an instant over the wooded hills beyond. But the old-time flights of pigeons are forever of the past. It had been nine years since the last few were seen here, and we had begun to think it very probable that they would never again be noted.

On June 16, a pair were seen in the same field and on June 18 three were noted by my brother, two of which he was very certain were young of the year. Perhaps a pair of "\$2.00 eggs" were hatched in this very locality.

Of the disappearance of the wild pigeon in Southern Michigan, we have the following notes: "Extinct at Ann Arbor in 1875," Dr. J. B. Steere. "Extinct in Monroe County in 1885," Jerome Trombley. "Last seen at Morrice, Mich., in 1881," Dr. W. C. Brownell.

We thus see that birds long supposed to be of the past may yet linger with us in a few lonely specimens. Oh! that we might reinstate again the proud hosts of the mystic past in the lands they once adorned, and in whose ornithological features they once figured so prominently. To this land a few still cling in loving faithfulness to the traits of an innumerable ancestry.